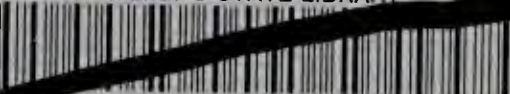


# *How to Prevent Car Theft*

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**PARK  SMART**

# *What is Park Smart?*

*The PARK SMART program was developed in Illinois in 1992 to help drivers reduce the crime of vehicle theft.*

*Terrance Gainer, director of the Illinois State Police and chairman of the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council, which funds the PARK SMART program, said:*

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***“Too many drivers in Illinois have a false sense of security about vehicle theft —they think that someone else’s car, truck, van or motorcycle — not theirs — may be stolen. Yet, in 1992, more than 71,000 people in Illinois were victims of vehicle theft.***

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***“Too many drivers believe their vehicles are safe from theft despite not taking basic precautions, such as rolling up windows, locking doors or parking on well-lighted streets.***

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# Vehicle Theft Research

*This brochure has been prepared by the Illinois Anti-Car Theft Committee — through a grant from the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council — to educate Illinois drivers about the seriousness of the car theft problem and to provide simple ways to prevent vehicle theft.*

*The PARK SMART program will bring many benefits to Illinois motorists including fewer vehicle thefts, less crime on Illinois' streets and lower overall costs related to the vehicle theft problem.*

*Motorists who become victims of auto theft are affected financially. Eventually, if vehicle theft is reduced significantly, insurance costs for all motorists could go down.*

*Fewer auto thefts in your area means fewer criminals in your neighborhood, making your community a safer one.*

*Since stolen vehicles are often used to commit other crimes, a reduction in stolen vehicles will help reduce other crimes in Illinois.*



*A survey of Illinois motorists, conducted in 1992 by Market Shares Corporation and funded by the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council, indicated that 90 percent of Illinois drivers do not believe that car theft is a serious problem. The survey also showed that:*

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***Only one in four motorists always locks the doors when leaving his or her vehicle.***

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***Most owners of vehicles five to six years old erroneously believe they are less likely to be victims of car theft than owners of newer vehicles.***

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***Many motorists wrongly believe their vehicles are not at risk when they leave them unlocked or running for a few minutes when shopping or parked in their driveways.***

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***One-fourth of motorists in the Chicago metropolitan area and a third outside the area with comprehensive insurance coverage incorrectly think insurance replaces unrecovered stolen vehicles at no financial loss to the owner.***

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***Eighty percent of Illinois motorists have no anti-theft devices installed in their vehicles.***

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***Only half of all motorists are aware of the theft prevention measure of window and parts etching.***

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# Vehicle Theft In Illinois: It's Real and Affects Us All

## Car theft is a serious problem in Illinois and throughout the U.S.:

More than **71,000** motor vehicles were reported stolen in Illinois in 1992.

Car theft in Illinois cost nearly **\$1 million a day**, or \$342 million, in 1992.

**Illinois ranked fifth** in the nation in the number of auto thefts in 1992.

**Chicago ranked third** among the nation's cities, with nearly **45,000** reported auto thefts in 1992.

Cook County and the collar counties (**DuPage, Kane, Will, McHenry and Lake**) accounted for 87 percent of all car thefts in Illinois in 1992.

**Rockford drivers** reported 1,225 motor vehicles stolen in 1992, about 83 percent of the 1,476 thefts — valued at more than \$7 million — in Winnebago County.

Vehicles worth nearly \$10 million were stolen in **St. Clair and Madison Counties** in 1992.

Of the total 2,077 reported stolen, 931, or 45 percent, were stolen in **East St. Louis**.

**Springfield** accounted for 437, or 87 percent, of the 503 reported vehicle thefts in **Sangamon County** in 1992. These vehicles were valued at more than \$2.4 million.

Vehicles stolen in **Peoria reached 431** in 1992, 88 percent of the 488 vehicles worth \$2.3 million reported stolen in Peoria County.

Nationally, auto theft **increased 60 percent** from 1983 to 1992 when nearly 1.6 million thefts were reported, making it the **fastest growing** property crime in the U.S. and the largest cost item under the comprehensive coverage of your auto insurance.

## How to Avoid Hot Cars/Parts

### How do you know the used car you just bought wasn't stolen?

Buying a stolen used car can often pose serious legal problems to unsuspecting buyers. In addition to losing the money used to purchase a car, you could also be prosecuted for car theft if you knew the car was stolen. Remember, not all stolen cars are sold for parts; there is also a market for stolen car sales.

### Following is a checklist to ensure that your next used car isn't "hot":

Use a reputable, licensed dealer. If you buy from an individual, make sure you keep the seller's address and telephone number.

Check the public vehicle identification number (VIN) tag for any tampering or alteration. The 17-digit public VIN is located on a metal plate on the driver's side of the dashboard along the lower portion of the windshield.

Check the Federal Certification Sticker on the driver's door. It should contain the same VIN found on the tag on the dashboard.

Examine the seller's vehicle title. Make sure the VIN on the title corresponds with the public VIN. Look for a branding of "rebuilt" on the title that would indicate the vehicle was a salvaged vehicle.

Check for recent paint jobs, which can be a cover-up for stolen vehicles.

Do not accept replacement keys. Ask for at least one set of the original manufacturer's keys.

Call your local police or county sheriff, or the Illinois State Police or Secretary of State's Police for vehicle identification if you believe the vehicle is questionable.

## Vehicle Theft Prevention Tips

### Lock your car and take your keys

When you park, close all windows, lock all doors and take the keys with you. Thieves need less than 30 seconds to steal most cars.

### Hide valuables out of sight

Thieves are attracted not only to your car, but also to the contents within. Thieves will often smash a window just to steal a camera, stereo or car phone.

### Turn wheels toward curb and apply emergency brake

Park with the front wheels turned sharply to the right or left and apply your emergency brake, making it difficult to tow your car away.

### Leave your car in gear or park

When parking a front-wheel-drive car, place your vehicle in park and apply the emergency brake. If you have a stick shift, put the gear into forward or reverse and apply the emergency brake.

### Park in well-lighted areas

Why give a thief the advantage of working under the cover of darkness, unnoticed?

### Lock both car and garage

When parking inside your garage at home, lock both your car and the garage door. When parking in a public garage, give the attendant the ignition key only and lock all valuables in the trunk or glove compartment.

### Take your wallet or purse with you

Don't leave your wallet, purse or driver's license in your car. Thieves could learn your address and later burglarize your home or impersonate you.

### Etch your vehicle identification number (VIN)

Consider etching your VIN into all car windows, T-tops and other expensive, removable parts.

### Drop your business card into door panel

This may assist police in identifying a stolen vehicle or stolen parts.

### Install and activate an anti-theft device

This may include devices which make the vehicle inoperable, such as a fuel cutoff or ignition kill switch, or devices such as sensors and motion detectors, sirens and paging units, steering wheel locks, shields that cover the ignition switch and wheel locks.

Check with your insurance company for information about the types of anti-theft devices which qualify for a discount on the comprehensive coverage of your policy.

## For More Information

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**Sue McKenna**  
Illinois Anti-Car Theft Committee (I-ACT)  
312.321.0653

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# Sponsors

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## **Illinois Anti-Car Theft Committee**

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*The Illinois Anti-Car Theft Committee (I-ACT), a not-for-profit corporation formed in 1989, is made up of more than 300 representatives from law enforcement, the insurance industry, and business, civic and community organizations who share the common goal of reducing vehicle theft in Illinois.*

## **Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council**

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*Funding for PARK SMART comes from a grant made by the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council. Grant funds are provided by all insurance companies licensed to write private passenger comprehensive coverage; the companies provide \$1 annually for each vehicle insured in Illinois in the previous year. Council grants have created special law enforcement task forces, focused prosecution programs, statewide law enforcement training programs and a statewide auditing program focused on vehicle-related businesses.*



# Quick Tips

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